

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EUR-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /071 W

-----057113 171250Z /53

O P 171040Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1092

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 1042

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, ASEC, DJ, ET, SO

SUBJECT: WSLF ATTACK ON RAILWAY STARTS NEW CYCLE
OF ATTACKS AND COUNTER-ATTACKS

REF: A) ADDIS ABABA 3078

B) DJIBOUTI 1001

C) MOGADISCIO 1595 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY - GROD FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT 11 JULY ATTACK ON TRAIN
JUST OVER FRONTIER IN ETHIOPIA PERFORMED BY WSLF ELEMENTS.
SIX HVITAGES ARE NOW BELIEVED TO BE IN SOMALIA, PERHAPS AT
MAJOR WSLF CAMP AT ABDULKADER. LOCAL SOMALI AMBASSADOR HAS
SEEMINGLY ACKNOWLEDGED PRESENCE HOSTAGES IN HIS COUNTRY AND
HAS PROMISED EARLY RETURN. MAJOR QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER
SOMALI GOVERNMENT CAN PROPERLY CONTROL REBEL ELEMENTS THAT
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IT SUPPORTS. END SUMMARY.

1. ATTACK ON ETHIOPIAN RAILWAY (COMPAGNIE DE CHEMIN DE FER
ETHIOPIEN - CFE) TRAIN OCCURED AT APPROXIMATELY 02:15 LOCAL
TIME 11 JULY AT LOCATION SOUTH OF DUENELE (DJIBOUTI BORDER),
THREE KILOMETERS NORTH OF AYSHA, THE FIRST CFE STOP IN
ETHIOPIA. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE GROD REPORT, WEST SOMALI

LIBERATIZN FRONT (WSLF) TEAM WAS IN PROCESS OF MINING BRIDGE (THERE ARE THREE MODEST BRIDGES LOCATED IN THIS IMMEDIATE REGION), WHEN TRAIN CARRYING FERTILIZER FROM DJIBOUTI ARRIVED ON SCENE. MATERIAL LEFT BY RAIDERS INCLUDES CIVILIAN PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE AND TAIL END OF OBJECT IDENTIFIED BY FRENCH MILITARY AS POLISH ANTI-TANK GRENADE.

2. REPORT OF ATTACK ON TWO TRAINS (REF A) IS INCORRECT. CFE TRAINS ALWAYS USE TWO LOCOMOTIVES IN THIS SECTOR AND ADDIS REPORT IS DERIVED FROM IGNORANCE THESE ARRANGEMENTS BY ETHIOPIAN JOURNALISTS WHO WERE LATER FLOWN TO SCENE. DESPITE HEAVY BUT BRIEF FIRE ON THE LOCOMOTIVES, THERE WERE NO INJURIES OR FATALITIES AMONG PEOPLE ON TRAIN. ENGINEER AND ENGINE CREWMAN ESCAPED INTO BUSH. TRAIN CHIEF, ONE OTHER TRAIN EMPLOYEE IN CABOOSE, AND FIVE DJIBOUTI PASSENGERS WERE TAKEN PRISONER BY WSLF TEAM WHICH QUICKLY DEPARTED SCENE ON FOOT IN DIRECTION SOMALI BORDER SOME 25 KILOMETERS DISTANT. ONE DJIBOUTI WOMAN PASSENGER, UNABLE TO KEEP UP WITH FORCED MARCH, WAS RELEASED. TRAIN RICH OF WAY WAS CLOSED FOR APPROXIMATELY 24 HOURS BEFORE NORMAL SCHEDULE RESUMED.

3. GROD OFFICIALS APPROPRIATELY INSENSSED ABOUT INCIDENT AND CLAIM TO HAVE FIRM EVIDENCE THAT HOSTAGES ARE NOW IN SOMALI REPUBLIC. PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED PARTICULARLY DISPLEASED AS HE RECENTLY SENT MESSAGE TO SIAD BARRE WARNING AGAINST ATTACK ON TRAIN (REF B). GOULED HAS REQUESTED SOMALI GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SECURING RELEASE OF HOSTAGES AND AMBASSADOR HUSSEIN OF SOMALIA REPORTEDLY ASSURED THAT DJIBOUTI PRESIDENT THAT HE WOULD HAVE IT. DJIBOUTIANS ARE ANGRY AT REPORTS FROM RELEASED PRISONER THAT HOSTAGES HARSHLY TREATED AS WSLF GROUP HASTENED TO RETURN TO SOMALIA SOIL. THE EVENING FOLLOWING THE ATTACK THE SOMALI EMBASSY GINNED UP A "VICTORY" CELEBRATION IN ONE LOCAL TOWNSHIP WHICH PERMITTED THE LOCAL POLICE TO LEAVE A FEW BRUISES BEFORE EVERYONE WAS INVITED TO RETURN HOME.

4. IT IS PROBABLE THAT WSLF TEAM INVOLVED IN RAILWAY ATTACK IS BASED AT ABDULKADER (AT SOUTHERN DIP IN ROAD LEADING FROM LOYADA TO HARGEISA) WHICH IS ONLY LOCATED ABOUT 50 KMS SOUTHEAST OF AYSHA IN SOMALIA. THE ETHIOPIAN AIR ATTACK ON 14 JULY WAS DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AGAINST THIS WSLF INSTALLATION, ACCORDING TO INFORMED FRENCH SOURCES, WHO CONFIRM THAT ABDULKADER IS A MAJOR WSLF SUPPLY AND COMMAND CENTER.

5. COMMENT - FROM THIS ANGLE, WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT ATTACK ON TRAIN AND ETHIOPIAN AIR ATTACK THREE DAYS LATER ARE DIRECTLY RELATED. THE UNSETTLING FACT THAT THE SOMALIA ATTACK ON A TRAIN FROM DJIBOUTI, WHERE FRANCE CONTINUES TO PLAY A PREDOMINANT ROLE IN MOST AREAS, TOOK PLACE THAT SAME MORNING THAT SIAD BARRE

ARRIVED IN PARIS FOR MEETINGS WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT AND SEVERAL OF HIS MOST IMPORTANT MINISTERS, IS PROBABLY JUST ANOTHER SERIOUS SOMALI GAFF. IT IS NOT TO BE TAKEN NECESSARILY AS EVIDENCE THAT THE WSLF HAS ANY SERIOUS INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION. SO FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THERE WAS NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT IN SOMALIA IN ADVANCE OF THE SIAD BARRE VISIT TO FRANCE, AND THE WSLF TEAM SIMPLY DID NOT REALIZE THAT THEIR ATTACK WOULD SERVE TO INCREASE FRENCH RESOLVE AND PROVIDE EXCUSE FOR PUBLIC FRENCH EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT RAILWAY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS WAS DULY NOTED IN TOAST GIVEN BY GISCARD IN OFFICIAL BANQUET FOR THE SOMALI PRESIDENT. WHILE WE ARE EXAMINING WAYS OF INDICATING TO SOMALIS THAT THEY MAY BE ON THE WAY TO FAVOR, IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE GESTURES PROVIDED FROM THE SOMALI SIDE ARE NOT VERY ENCOURAGING.

CLARKE

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